(b) if so, the number of serials telecast on it;

(c) whether this programme has been discontinued;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(e) the time by which it is likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) to (e). The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Performance of Steel Authority of India Limited

2957. DR. RAMKRISHNA KUSMARIA : Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state :

(a) the Financial performance of the Steel Authority of India Ltd. during the first six months, Plant-wise;

(b) whether the profitability of the SAIL has declined during the current year as compared to the last year;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps taken or proposed to be taken to improve the performance of the SAIL?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) During the first six months of the current year; i.e. April to September, 1996, SAIL has made a pre-tax profit (unaudited) of Rs. 414.98 crores and after providing Rs. 53.53 crores towards Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) the profit is Rs. 361.45 crores. The plant-wise net profit/ loss is as under :

	Rs./Crores
- Bhilai Steel Plant	388
- Durgapur Steel Plant	(-) 96
- Rourkela Steel Plant	(-) 127
- Bokaro Steel Plant	237
- Alloy Steels Plant	(-) 19
- Salem Steel Plant	(-) 25
- Raw Materials Division; Other Central Units etc.	57
Net Profit before tax	415
Provision for Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT)	54
Net Profit after tax	361

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The decline in profits is mainly attributable to abnormal escalation in input prices viz. coal, petroleum products, power, transportation and higher interest and depreciation costs.

(d) SAIL is taking steps on a continuous basis to improve the performance, which include increasing capacity utilisation, improving productivity, introducing energy conservation measures, improving availability of equipment through effective maintenance, improving product-mix,. making value added items and meeting customer's requirements, and reduction in consumption viz. coke, energy, stores & spares, etc.

Air Freight Carriers Operation

2958. SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) the foreign and Indian air freight carriers operating to and from India;

(b) the airports where these aircraft land and take off;

(c) the rates for various categories of cargo from India to Europe;

(d) whether the freight rates to African countries from India are four to five times more than the freight rates to European countries;

(e) whether the high rate of freight charges to African countries is designed to make Indian goods non-competitive in African countries;

(f) if so, whether the Governement have taken up this matter with any international agency for arbitration and

(g) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) to (e). The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

[Translation]

Regional Centres of Films Division

2959. SHRI RAJESH RANJAN ALIAS PAPPU YADAV :
SHRI RAMESHWAR PATIDAR :
SHRI SHIVRAJ SINGH :

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BRADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) the number of regional centres of Films Division in the country;

(b) whether all the facilities have been made available in these centres;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the Government propose to encourage the artists and the telecast of regional serials; and

(e) if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) There are two regional production centres of the Films Division, namely, Southern Regional

Production Centre, Bangalore and Eastern Regional Production Centre, Calcutta, apart from a unit of the Division at New Delhi for production of family welfare and defence training films.

(b) These centres have been provided with essential items of equipment and facilities such as 16mm cameras, editing machines and recording equipment.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) and (e). One of the primary functions of Doordarshan is to provide a platform, through its channels, to the abundant talent available within the country in various regions in the field of music and other cultural art forms. The local artists are also engaged by the Films Division for its featurettes.

[English]

International Airport in Punjab

2960. SHRI SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware of the difficulties being faced by people visiting Punjab from foreign countries due to the absence of an international airport in Punjab;

(b) if so, the time by which an international airport is likely to be established there;

(c) the details of airports proposed to be set up in the Punjab and the locations thereof; and

(d) the time by which the work is likely to commence thereon?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) and (b). Amritsar Airport is already provided with facilities to cater to international operations.

(c) and (d). At present, there is no proposal to set up any new airport in Punjab.

[Translation]

Gauge Conversion

2961. PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to convert Ajmer-Khandwa and Ajmer-Chitor-Udaipur lines into broad gauge;

(b) if so, whether the Government have conducted/ propose to conduct any survey in this regard;

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps being taken by the Government for the the development of Nasirabad and Vijay Nagar Railway stations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). Survey for Ajmer-Chitor-Udaipur section has been completed. Chittaurgarh-Neemuch section is Broad Gauge. Work on Neemuch-Ratlam section has been taken up. Survey for Ratlam-Khandwa Gauge Conversion has been taken up.

(d) The stations will be provided with adequate facilities to handle the level of traffic alongwith the Gauge Conversion works in the coming years.

[English]

Schemes for Concessional Fares

2962. SHRI A.C. JOSE : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Indian Airlines/Air India have any schemes which allows concessional fares for ordinary passengers; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Some such schemes in existence at present are :-

(1) Special introductory fares on Air India's new operations to Chicago. One domestic round trip ticket is also offered to every passenger travelling round trip between India and New York/Chicago on certain classes of fares.

(2) 25% incentive has also been introduced from 16.10.96 till 31.03.97 on net fare portion applicable to domestic sectors on Air India network.

Indian Airlines offers 50% discount on fares to senior citizens, students, blind persons, cancer patients war widows, war disabled persons, members of armed forces and personnel of general reserve engineering force etc.

[Translation]

Telephone Connections in Tamil Nadu

2963. SHRI N.S.V. CHITTHAN : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of telephone connections provided in Tamil Nadu, district-wise and category-wise during 1996-97, till date;

(b) the number of telephone connections proposed to be given during the remaining period of 1996-97, district-wise and category-wise;

(c) the number of telephone connections proposed to be given during the remaining period of 1996-97, district-wise and category-wise; and